

# RESEARCH UPDATE

December 2020



# RESEARCH UPDATE DECEMBER 2020

Publisher:  
Edmonton Social Planning Council  
Suite 200, Bassani Building  
10544-106 Street NW  
Edmonton, Alberta, T5H 2X6

Prepared and edited by  
Jenn Rossiter,  
Research Services and Capacity  
Building Coordinator

This report is published by the  
Edmonton Social Planning Council.  
Articles, quotes, and commentaries  
reflect the views of the authors and do  
not necessarily represent the official  
position or policy of the Edmonton  
Social Planning Council.



Licensed under a Creative Commons  
Attribution-NonCommercial-ShareAlike  
4.0 International License.

## IN THIS ISSUE

Working-Age Singles: The “Forgotten Poor” of Canada.....	1
<i>Reviewed by Kara Abdolmaleki</i>	
Indigenous Homelessness in Canada.....	4
<i>Reviewed by Shawna Ladouceur</i>	
Youth Homelessness in B.C.....	6
<i>Reviewed by Mohamed Mohamed</i>	
Achieving Pharmacare for All.....	8
<i>Reviewed by Hanna Nash</i>	
Housing First as a Form of Intervention.....	10
<i>Reviewed by Reem Saraya</i>	
Revisioning Coordinated Access.....	12
<i>Reviewed by Asheika Sood</i>	
Basic Income as a COVID-19 Response in B.C.....	14
<i>Reviewed by Elaine Tran</i>	
Decriminalizing Race.....	16
<i>Reviewed by Aastha Tripathi</i>	
Colouring Outside the Lines.....	19
<i>Reviewed by Jayme Wong</i>	

# WORKING-AGE SINGLES: THE “FORGOTTEN POOR” OF CANADA

Reviewed by Kara Abdolmaleki

## Introduction

This report presents the findings of extensive research about employable singles on social assistance, undertaken by Toronto Employment and Social Services in partnership with the Ontario Centre for Workforce Innovation. The report indicates that single Canadians with no dependents are the most likely to fall into “deep poverty,” with an income of less than \$10,000 (including social assistance benefits). “Deep poverty” is defined as earned income below 75% of the poverty line.<sup>1</sup> Contrary to common belief, the report adds, the 69,000 single working-age people on social assistance in Toronto are neither homogeneous nor predominantly male: 38% are women, 38% are 45+ years of age, and only 20% are under the age of 30.<sup>2</sup>

In the past 35 years, due to longer life expectancy, increased financial independence for women, and higher divorce rates, the number of Canadians living alone has grown more than 200%—from 1.7 million in 1981 to 4.0 million in 2016, the first year in which one-person households made up the most common household type in census history (p. 8). A similar trend exists in Alberta, where the number of social assistance caseloads declined among lone-parents, yet increased among singles, who constituted 70% of Albertans experiencing deep poverty between 2012 and 2016 (p. 10). This change in the composition of caseloads is due to multiple factors, including the polarization of the job market<sup>3</sup> and the increased precarity of employment—reinforcing disadvantages for some, and creating newly vulnerable populations. Unfortunately, Income security programs have failed to adjust: by maintaining their “family bias,” the report contends, these programs have left the singles behind, rendering them Canada’s “forgotten poor” (p. 8).

---

---

*The number of Canadians living alone has grown more than 200%—from 1.7 million in 1981 to 4.0 million in 2016*

---

---

## Summary of Key Points

A main finding of the report is that public income support—social assistance, tax credits, and supplementary benefits—for single Canadians living in poverty are far less generous, compared to those for Canadian families. Their reliance on very modest social assistance payments has led to a slew of issues, including malnourishment, deterioration of mental and physical health, and of course the social stigma and isolation that accompanies poverty. The report includes direct quotes from in-depth, three-hour interview that were

---

<sup>1</sup> The poverty line for singles ranges from \$16,423 to \$20,681 in annual income. [1]

<sup>2</sup> For detailed statistics, see page 13 onward in the report.

<sup>3</sup> Polarization of the job market is defined as “an increase in higher-skilled and well-paying knowledge jobs, alongside lower-skilled and lower-paid entry level positions” (p. 11).

conducted, and the main thread that runs through all these accounts is a mire that begins with food insecurity, leading to mental lethargy and physical weakness, which leads to depression and social isolation.

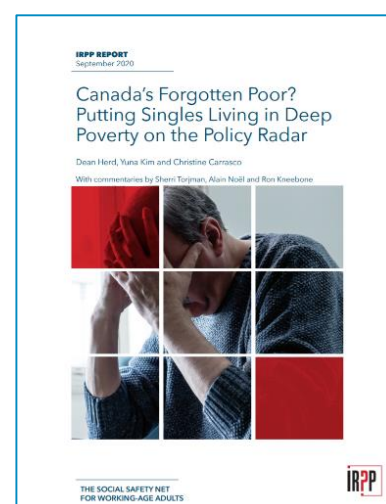
### Summary of Commentaries

**Sheri Torjman** lauds the progress made in the last few decades in lifting families out of poverty, yet she laments the system's stalling when it comes to working-age singles who are stuck behind the welfare wall. She offers three major policy-reform options:

- (1) a redesign of Employment Insurance,
- (2) an expansion of the Canada Workers Benefit to provide an income guarantee to low-income workers and boost their take-home earnings, and
- (3) a “big bang” rebuilding of all income-support programs (p. 3).

She also stresses the need for “more diverse individualized support services for the most vulnerable” (p. 3).

**Ron Kneebone** points to the fact that when it comes to poverty, public policy has been mainly driven by political campaigns that have targeted seniors and families with children. However, now that single people make up the largest group of households in the census, and singles constitute the largest group among the poor, policy-making efforts should shift from reducing the overall rate of poverty to specifically focusing on singles and the consequences of poverty among them. In addition to a significant increase in social assistance benefits for this group, Kneebone recommends annual cost-of-living adjustments, made on the basis of changes in rental costs, as housing is the most significant challenge for singles in deep poverty.



### My comments

As I was reading through snippets of the interviews interspersed throughout the report, I had a striking realization that the combined effect of unemployment, malnutrition, and isolation makes it almost impossible for participants to seek, let alone find, employment once they are trapped in this downward spiral. To compound the problem, they are referred to over-worked social workers and government employees, congested Service Canada phone lines, and must address the complexities of applying for Employment Insurance (EI) or other post-pandemic benefits, all of which would seem like an unnavigable tangled mess of red tape.

I, therefore, believe that the recommendations of the three commentators are sufficient in providing a robust safety net for the population under study. However, what is missing is taking heed of the person's mental health and emotional well-being. The stigma of being unemployed and on social assistance leads to an extremely fragile emotional state and a declining sense of self-worth. Instead, I wonder if a universal basic income (UBI) may be a much simpler solution, one that does not force participants to fill out cumbersome application forms and reports, or meet complex and ever-stringent conditions to receive assistance. Federal and provincial governments may loosen eligibility conditions or increase the amounts; however, in order to help individuals join the job market again, their mental health and human dignity must remain a top priority.

As we are nearing a full year since the start of the COVID-19 pandemic, many EI payments will come to an end, which can lead to a crisis of unprecedented proportions. It is important to begin discussing a more radical approach—perhaps a UBI—before we find ourselves in the eye of the storm come Spring of 2021.

#### **PUBLICATION SOURCE:**

Herd, D., Kim, Y., & Carrasco, C. (2020). *Canada's Forgotten Poor? Putting Singles Living in Deep Poverty on the Policy Radar*. IRPP Report. <https://irpp.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/09/Canada-Forgotten-Poor-Putting-Singles-Living-in-Deep-Poverty-on-the-Policy-Radar.pdf>

#### **ADDITIONAL SOURCES:**

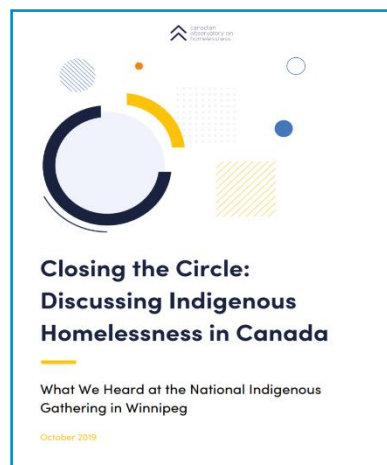
[1] Statistics Canada. (2017). *Canadian income survey, 2017*. <https://www150.statcan.gc.ca/n1/daily-quotidien/190226/dq190226b-eng.htm>

#### **ABOUT THE RESEARCH REVIEWER:**

*Kara Abdolmaleki is a researcher and instructor in the Humanities. He holds a PhD in Comparative Literature from the University of Alberta. His work has appeared in the International Journal of Iranian Studies, Film International, and The Guardian. His research interests include postcolonial theory, cultural studies, modernity, political economy, and Critical Theory.*

# INDIGENOUS HOMELESSNESS IN CANADA

Reviewed by Shawna Ladouceur



---

*Success . . . requires dismantling the colonial Western construct of “ending homelessness”*

---

In 2017, the Canadian Observatory on Homelessness (COH), in partnership with Ma Mawi Wi Chi Itata Centre and the Social Planning Council of Winnipeg, convened a Roundtable to discuss Indigenous homelessness in Canada. They were joined by Indigenous service providers, advocates, and people with lived experience to discuss the meaning of Indigenous homelessness with the goal of defining and envisioning a measurable end. Though these Roundtable discussions did result in suggestions, next steps,

and key themes, they also resulted in concerns. Some participants, troubled by the misunderstanding by meeting organizers of various Indigenous protocols, limited their participation. Others noted the imposition of a Western model on ending Indigenous homelessness that proved incompatible with Indigenous worldviews. Heeding these concerns, the COH hosted a second consultation session, the National Indigenous Gathering (the Gathering) in 2019. This report reflects on lessons learned and steps taken to close the circle with this subsequent discussion of Indigenous homelessness in Canada.

Participants from the original 2017 Roundtable, and facilitators from End Homelessness Winnipeg, joined the COH in their now-supportive role for this Indigenous-informed and -led consultation session. The main themes that arose from discussions highlighted the continuing impact of colonialism on policy and system-level practices meant to address Indigenous homelessness. These policies and practices tokenize the participation of Indigenous peoples or exclude them from the table altogether. Participants of the Gathering expounded on the critical need to have both Indigenous and non-Indigenous people speak up together. But in order to become informed allies, and thus more powerful advocates, the Gathering called on non-Indigenous people to learn about the experiences and realities of Indigenous homelessness. The promotion of healing, rebuilding identity, spirit, and connection to Indigenous cultural practices, while recognizing the cross-country diversity of Indigenous communities, are essential to addressing Indigenous homelessness across Canada.

The top-down approach of the Western model embodied in non-Indigenous-led organizations and government agencies continues to deny Indigenous self-determination. Coordinated effort to affect system-level change requires building a common language to speak to Indigenous homelessness. As suggested by the Gathering, development of this common language could begin with a move to local and Indigenous-based data collection methodologies focusing on spirit. This move would result in culturally relevant assessments, and interventions rooted in Indigenous cultures, informed by an Indigenous worldview.

Discussion of the physical characteristics of housing structures demonstrated a need for more diversity. Recognizing diversity involves distinction-based advocacy groups that support First Nations, Métis, and Inuit needs. It also acknowledges the unique features and specific needs that qualify Urban Indigenous peoples as a distinction-based group. There is a need for future discussion regarding equity-seeking groups such as people with disabilities, 2SLGBTQ+, and youth—especially those leaving care. The recognition of diversity, culturally relevant supports, policies, and practices are also crucial. Indigenous knowledge and views must be embedded in an inclusive, holistic approach.

Success on any of these fronts requires dismantling the colonial Western construct of “ending homelessness,” and rebuilding with a foundation based on Indigenous worldviews. The Gathering called for Indigenous-specific funding, rather than the current model that requires competition between organizations in order to access a small portion of existing funding programs. Eliminating competition would also promote national coordination and co-operation between allies and advocates to support leadership work with governments on Indigenous homelessness.

The Gathering brought to the fore the need to highlight the distinction between Indigenous and non-Indigenous homelessness. There was a unanimous desire among participants to use what was learned to unite and advance a system reflective of Indigenous worldviews. An informed understanding, common language, and a united front are required to adequately address Indigenous homelessness in Canada.

#### **PUBLICATION SOURCE:**

Canadian Observatory on Homelessness. (2019). *Closing the Circle: Discussing Indigenous Homelessness in Canada*. Canadian Observatory on Homelessness Press.  
[https://www.homelesshub.ca/sites/default/files/attachments/WWHW\\_13082020.pdf](https://www.homelesshub.ca/sites/default/files/attachments/WWHW_13082020.pdf)

#### **ABOUT THE RESEARCH REVIEWER:**

*Shawna Ladouceur is a Registered Nurse who sees the impacts of the social determinants of health in ways that demand action. She has extensive experience working directly with vulnerable populations in the inner city. Her personal interests include skiing, hiking, biking, running, reading, and travelling.*

## YOUTH HOMELESSNESS IN B.C.

Reviewed by Mohamed Mohamed

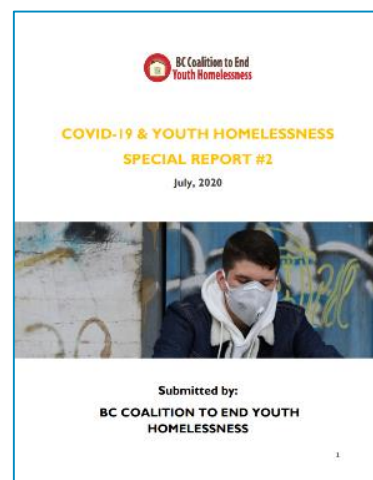
The BC Coalition to End Youth Homelessness was founded in 2017 to help develop plans that properly tackle the youth homelessness crisis in British Columbia. As such, co-chairs Sarah Stewart and Katherine McParland produced *COVID-19 & Youth Homelessness Special Report #2*, which investigates how COVID-19 has further impacted the struggles that youth face in accessing stable housing.

Given the nature of COVID-19 and its tendency to spread rapidly in indoor settings, shelters have become less of an option for youth. For those willing to take the risk and seek refuge at them, capacity in places like Metro Vancouver is low. Other issues that youth face include displacement from tent cities, an inability to pay rent which leads to living in cars, and limited supports when leaving abusive home situations—situations that can lead to ongoing sexual and emotional abuse.

The report notes that the unique issues youth will face in accessing housing as a result of COVID-19 warrant a distinct plan. These issues include stigmatization from landlords, limited access to low-barrier supportive housing, and overall affordability concerns. Solutions are diverse, such as building affordable housing specific for youth and tailored to their needs. Another proposed solution is to increase funding to community groups that, among other things, help youth develop life-skills to maintain housing. There are also calls for transition plans for those living in temporary hotels in order to ensure they are not back on the street, as well as for financial supports provided during the pandemic to continue afterwards—possibly through the creation of a universal basic income.

Youth who are transitioning out of the care system will also be impacted by the pandemic. For one, there are youth within the system who want to leave, or who are aging out, but face difficulties accessing housing on their own. Some of the suggestions to tackle this include the continued advancement of the low-barrier Agreements with Young Adults program, and government strategies such as a housing plan for youth who are aging out of the system, along with in-person transition planning support.

A key element of this report is the thorough diagnosis of different kinds of issues that youth face, which is to its credit. It goes into detail on concerns about substance abuse, mental health, and education. The information is grim—particularly that of substance abuse during the pandemic. Due to border closures and disruptions to drug trafficking, youth are creating their own drugs, resulting in an increase in overdoses. Unsafe practices are occurring, like needle sharing, which is a major health risk. There is also a decrease in access to treatment centers. Ways to mitigate substance abuse would include increasing safe spaces and harm reduction services, and improving access to treatment programs, alongside greater reduction in stigma from the government to enhance community support for youth dealing with substance abuse.



The report does a very good job at addressing the deep problems surrounding COVID-19's impact on youth homelessness in British Columbia. It identifies different issues that youth are facing now and will face once the



pandemic ends, as well as providing a long list of possible solutions that could be of great benefit to the provincial government. One flaw is the lack of discussion about the different experiences that BIPOC youth experience when it comes to securing affordable housing, though that could be partly due to a lack of race-based data on youth homelessness.

#### **PUBLICATION SOURCE:**

McParland, K. (2020). *COVID-19 & Youth Homelessness Special Report # 2*. BC Coalition to End Youth Homelessness. <https://www.homelesshub.ca/resource/COVID-19-youth-homelessness-special-report-2>

#### **ABOUT THE RESEARCH REVIEWER:**

*Mohamed Mohamed is a recent graduate of MacEwan University with a Bachelor of Arts, majoring in Sociology. Mohamed has hopes of studying public health through the epidemiology stream, with an interest in health outcomes among ethnicity. In his spare time, Mohamed enjoys outdoor sports, gaming, and reading about healthcare.*

# ACHIEVING PHARMACARE FOR ALL

Reviewed by Hanna Nash

---

*20% of Canadians either simply cannot afford medication or do not have adequate insurance to cover their required medication*

---

Canada's universal health care is a keystone marker of what many Canadians would identify as, in part, what makes us proud to be Canadian; a nation of those who aid and support one another in all health matters, regardless of outcome. Though our country has continued to expand services under universal health care since 1966, one area remains unincorporated. In the Advisory Council on the Implementation of National Pharmacare's report, *A Prescription for Canada - Achieving Pharmacare for All*, the authors discuss how nationally implemented pharmaceutical access would benefit all Canadians and our country's health care expenditures.

Formed in 2018, this federally appointed advisory council made significant findings and key recommendations to the federal government after studying global pharmaceutical policies and interviewing diverse groups of Canadians in all provinces and territories such as: politicians, Indigenous leaders, patients, health care providers, business owners, and academics. What is perhaps most striking among their findings is an imminent need for universal pharmaceutical accessibility in Canada—its financial impact would not only benefit individuals, but would save Canadian taxpayers significant amounts of money each year, within its first year of operation even (p. 47).

A transition phase beginning January 1, 2022 would allow the development of a Canadian drug agency to work with federal, provincial, and territorial governments to create a list of drugs that would be covered, and would continue to add recommended drugs and pharmaceuticals for a fully operational agency by January 1, 2027 (p. 78). When purchasing prescriptions drugs, Canadians would not be expected to spend more than \$100.00 annually per household.

Approximately 20% of Canadians either simply cannot afford medication or do not have adequate insurance to cover their required medication (p. 113). This means that many Canadians do not take their essential prescriptions, which can cause further health complications later on, or, as in the case of one million Canadians, they must borrow money to afford the cost of their medications. What is further distressing is that Canadians who are already at a financial disadvantage are also the most impacted, and are more likely to experience ill health due to inaccessibility to medication. The elitism of pharmaceutical accessibility in Canada is felt most disproportionately by women, young people, and low-income wage earners. The end result of this disjointed and unequal approach to pharmaceuticals is that too many Canadians fall into poor health and cost Canada's health care system billions of dollars in visits to ERs, hospitals, and physicians each year while missing work and/or school—thereby further preventing them from improving finances and health (p. 169).

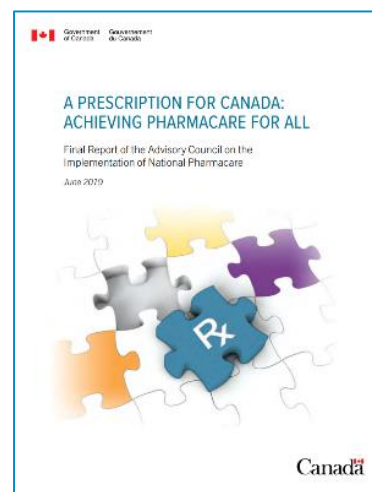
The difficulty in managing Canada's pharmaceutical costs is due to its collage of public (100) and private (100,000) drug plans that do not present significant clout when negotiating the cost of medications, as they are not unified. Among countries that offer universal health care, Canada is the only nation that does not have

pharmaceuticals included under its health care plan. Additionally, the advisory council discovered that Canada pays some of the highest drug prices in the world compared to other OECD nations. The only countries that pay more for pharmaceuticals are the United States and Switzerland (p. 29).

These findings pose too great a risk for Canada's health care to continue without putting individuals and the government into further debt. The solution to saving federal money and aiding individuals is for each province and territory to place pharmaceuticals under universal health care. This would ensure that, as a single-payer nation, Canada would have greater bargaining power against pharmaceutical companies and would, in turn, be able to negotiate better prices for all prescription drugs—including new and ground breaking treatments and formulas.

The authors tested their universal health care approach by calculating the costs of covering medications for those with diabetes, cardiovascular disease, and chronic respiratory conditions. By covering individual expenses for those particular health conditions, Canadians could conceivably save up to \$1.2 billion each year (p. 47).

With these findings in mind, the authors advocate for a drug agency to push forward and come to fruition. However, one factor that must be considered is the co-operation of all provinces and territories in achieving this final stage of universal health care. If these recommendations can be fully embraced by provincial and territorial governments, the federal government could potentially see huge savings in medical costs, and a healthier, more productive, society.



## PUBLICATION SOURCE:

Government of Canada. (2019). *A prescription for Canada: Achieving pharmacare for all*. Health Canada.  
<https://www.canada.ca/en/health-canada/corporate/about-health-canada/public-engagement/external-advisory-bodies/implementation-national-pharmacare/final-report.html>

## ABOUT THE RESEARCH REVIEWER:

*Hanna Nash enjoys ballet performances and other live theatre, as well as outdoor sports, and travelling to new countries. Hanna is interested in sharing information and knowledge to Edmonton's diverse communities.*

# HOUSING FIRST AS A FORM OF INTERVENTION

Reviewed by Reem Saraya

The Pathways Housing First (HF) model is a structure for the provision of housing and support services to individuals transitioning out of homelessness. HF provides participants with housing, rental assistance, and intensive community support. The rental assistance ensures that participants do not pay more than 30% of their income for housing, and the intensive support is provided in the form of Assertive Community Treatment (ICM) or Intensive Case Management (ICM).

In the report *Analysis of Housing First as a Practical and Policy Relevant Intervention*, Tim Aubry outlines his findings on the extent to which HF exhibits a defined set of criteria as identified by Bond et al. (2010) [1] in their framework of Ideal Features of a Mental Health Intervention, and therefore the relevance and effectiveness of HF as a mental health intervention. The nine ideal features are:

- intervention is well defined,
- reflects client goals,
- consistent with societal goals,
- evidence of effectiveness,
- minimal negative effects,
- long-term positive outcomes,
- incurs reasonable costs,
- relatively easy to implement, and
- adaptable to diverse communities and client subgroups.

Analysis of Housing First as a Practical and Policy Relevant Intervention: The Current State of Knowledge and Future Directions for Research

Tim Aubry

School of Psychology, Centre for Research on Educational and Community Services, University of Ottawa, Canada

Based on his literature review, Aubry concludes that HF demonstrates all but one of the ideal features. The extent to which HF produces long-term positive outcomes could not be evaluated, largely due to a lack of research. There is clearly a need for longer-term studies on HF and its impact. Most significantly, North American evidence irrefutably demonstrates HF's effectiveness in achieving housing for most individuals experiencing chronic homelessness. The Canadian [At Home/Chez Soi](#) trial found that HF was superior in helping establish housing stability for individuals with serious mental illness, compared to the usual services available.

A French trial operated in four cities had notable housing outcomes as well, with 85% of participants receiving HF housing after 2 years, compared to 40% of participants receiving housing under another program. Also notable with this trial and its participants was a significant reduction in hospitalizations, since health services were provided to HF participants in their homes. These findings were similar to those of US and Canadian trials.

Qualitative data shared in the report illustrates that most HF participants reported positive life changes and found participation in the project transformational. In comparison, many participants who were receiving usual services reported they were not making much progress and were experiencing deterioration.

Aubrey notes that evidence of effectiveness for non-housing outcomes is less clear. In comparison to the usual services and treatment available in communities, the findings on HF in enhancing quality of life have been

inconsistent, and there is no evidence to date showing HF produces better outcomes when it comes to mental health, physical health, and substance use.

Current research indicates that HF program costs are at least partially offset by reduced involvement in the health care, social services, and justice systems. The findings suggest that the program can be implemented in a relatively consistent manner, in a range of different contexts, with various levels of capacity and training. Additionally, the program is adaptable to diverse communities and subgroups. Findings from the Canadian trial demonstrate HF's superior housing outcomes in comparison to usual treatment and services for youth and older adults. The Canadian trial has also been successfully adapted for Indigenous clients and minority groups.

The report makes a number of recommendations for HF research in the future. These include examining the effectiveness of targeted forms of evidence-based community support that could be integrated into HF programming. The report also recommends longer-duration HF studies, increased research on the relationship between program fidelity and outcomes, increased cost-benefit and cost-effectiveness research, more use of qualitative methods in outcome studies, and a comparison of the effectiveness of HF combined with different types of support. Additionally, further research could determine individual characteristics that may be contributing to 10-20% of HF participants failing to achieve housing stability.

This report provides a clear overview of the effectiveness and potential benefits of implementing the HF model to assist individuals in the transition from homelessness to stable housing. It also clearly outlines some of the limitations of research on HF. Notably: differences between HF programs have not been documented, no clear definition of what the usual services and treatments are in HF studies, a lack of focus on health outcomes evaluated in the studies considered, and a lack of qualitative research findings. Aubrey outlines a number of inconsistencies and limitations in HF studies. Addressing these would add to the literature on HF and contribute to more robust evidence-based programming in the future.

#### **PUBLICATION SOURCE:**

Aubrey, T. (2020). *Analysis of housing first as a practical and policy relevant intervention: The current state of knowledge and future directions for research*. European Journal of Homelessness, 14(1), 13-26.

<https://www.homelesshub.ca/resource/analysis-housing-first-practical-and-policy-relevant-intervention-current-state-knowledge>

#### **ADDITIONAL SOURCES:**

[1] Bond, G.R., Drake, R. and Becker, D.R. (2010) Beyond Evidence-based Practice: Nine Ideal Features of a Mental Health Intervention, *Research on Social Work* 20(5) pp.493-501.

#### **ABOUT THE RESEARCH REVIEWER:**

*Reem Saraya is interested in local and national politics, social policy issues including homelessness and poverty, violence against women, Indigenous rights, and refugee/migrant rights and issues. She enjoys volunteering, research, writing, hiking, painting, and photography.*

## REVISIONING COORDINATED ACCESS

Reviewed by Asheika Sood

*Revisioning Coordinated Access: Fostering Indigenous Best Practices towards a Wholistic Systems Approach to Homelessness* was prepared by the Canadian Observatory on Homelessness (COH) and the Social Planning and Research Council of Hamilton (SPRC). Both organizations focus broadly on conducting various forms of research and engagement, and are each comprised of a variety of roles from academia, policy, service provision, and planning. The report authors from the SPRC of Hamilton are part of the Indigenous Reaching Home Team, which appears to include Indigenous contributors.

*Revisioning Coordinated Access* takes a critical review of the Government of Canada's strategy for homelessness (Reaching Home: Canada's Homelessness Strategy), particularly the requirement that all "Designated Communities (i.e., urban centres in Canada) have a coordinated access system in place by March 31, 2022" (p. 10). The authors look at the potential impacts of this strategy for Indigenous people in a Hamilton context, with some Canada-wide jurisdictional review.



Coordinated access systems are systems designed to ensure all service agencies have access to the same information regardless which organization is visited. The benefit of this process is to avoid the need for clients to re-tell potentially painful stories, and ensure that clients of homelessness services are not required to start from scratch at each agency. The report makes an important case into the potentially damaging effects of collecting data without consideration of the distinct experiences of Indigenous peoples, the importance of honouring Indigenous data sovereignty, and including Indigenous communities in service design.

The report provides detailed recommendations on how coordinated access systems could be designed to be responsive to the needs of Indigenous clients using three lenses: (1) engagement with the federal government and Designated Community Entities, (2) implementation of coordinated access, and (3) data sovereignty (p. 20–24).

Under the first lens of engaging with the federal government and Designated Community Entities, the authors begin by suggesting that the Reaching Home strategy should build clear guidelines on cross-stream engagement between Community Entities and Indigenous Community Entities to ensure Indigenous involvement in design (p. 87). The report puts forward the idea that Indigenous agencies need to be adequately and sustainably funded, and that municipalities designated as Community Entities under the Reaching Home strategy "should be responsible for finding creative funding solutions in order to ensure long-term sustainability of Indigenous agencies" (p. 90).

In terms of the second lens, implementation of coordinated access, one recommendation is that services should be available in person, with free bus tickets provided, along with access by a variety of different

methods, like telephone or Skype, in case clients find it hard to access a particular service location (p. 94). Intake should occur with an “intersectional, culturally safe, and trauma-informed lens in implementation” (p. 95) that takes into consideration clients’ lived experiences in order to make sure services feel safe and welcoming. It should also occur at the pace of the client without strict deadlines, and should avoid rigid “deficit-based, Western perspectives” (p. 96) such as the Vulnerability Index – Service Prioritization Decision Assistance Tool (VI-SPDAT), as these assessments can be demeaning and make participants feel they must prove their trauma to receive services (p. 96).

Finally, in relationship to the third lens, data collection and Indigenous data sovereignty, the authors advocate for benchmarks and data requirements to be “co-created with national Indigenous homelessness experts,” (p. 100). Data collection should also be culturally relevant, Indigenous agencies should be included in data governance committees, and Indigenous agencies have the right to decide how their data is stored and analyzed (p. 99-102). These recommendations are foundational to ensure the security of Indigenous knowledge and protection of Indigenous clients who have faced prolonged trauma from data theft used against their communities.

Overall, this article is a critical read for anyone in the housing sector, particularly those agencies involved in the formation of coordinated access through the Reaching Home strategy. The limitations of the article are that it is focused on the city of Hamilton, and only “provides an example of how Designated Communities should collaborate with Indigenous community members in a way that is Indigenous led” (p. 10). The report does not place a strong onus on the Government of Canada to mandate Indigenous engagement and involvement in all jurisdictions across Canada, nor to provide the funding to ensure this happens; however, the recommendations do emphasize the importance of guidelines. Given that Indigenous peoples are overrepresented in homeless populations in Canada, it is imperative that Indigenous communities, organizations, and agencies are mandated to be involved in these processes going forward (p. 12). The report also does not clearly define Indigenous communities, Indigenous agencies, or Indigenous organizations. There would be a definite requirement to firmly involve Indigenous communities in defining these terms and in determining who should be at the table. Overall, the report most strongly provides a request for homeless-serving communities and agencies across Canada, particularly those involved with Reaching Home, to ensure Indigenous peoples are involved at every stage of the design of coordinated access. The range of recommendations show the breadth of ways that involving Indigenous experiences could improve service provisions and outcomes.

#### **PUBLICATION SOURCE:**

Canadian Observatory on Homelessness & Social Planning and Research Council of Hamilton. (2020). *Revisioning Coordinated Access: Fostering Indigenous Best Practices Towards a Wholistic Systems Approach to Homelessness*. [https://www.homelesshub.ca/sites/default/files/attachments/RevisioningCoordinatedAccess\\_June\\_30.pdf](https://www.homelesshub.ca/sites/default/files/attachments/RevisioningCoordinatedAccess_June_30.pdf)

#### **ABOUT THE RESEARCH REVIEWER:**

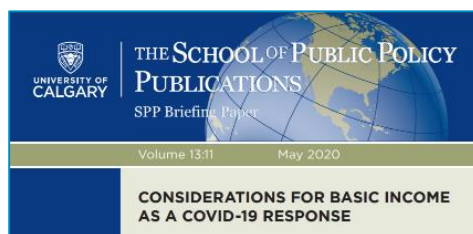
*Asheika Sood (she/her/they) is a settler born in Treaty 6 territory in amiskwaciy-wâskahikan or the lands currently known as Edmonton. Her family originates from Punjab, India. She is passionate about listening and doing work that aligns with the interests of community.*



## BASIC INCOME AS A COVID-19 RESPONSE IN B.C.

Reviewed by Elaine Tran

*Considerations for Basic Income as a COVID-19 Response* is a report authored by a trio of professors, academic researchers, and policy experts: David Green, from the Vancouver School of Economics at the University of British Columbia; Jonathan Rhys Kesselman, from the School of Public Policy at Simon Fraser University; and Lindsay Tedds, from the School of Public Policy at the University of Calgary. Each of these subject-matter experts has research interests varying from finance to income inequality to tax policy, among many others. Currently, they all serve as policy experts on a provincial committee which will determine the numerous crucial factors surrounding the potential implementation of a basic income program in British Columbia. *Considerations for Basic Income as a COVID-19 Response* is classified as a briefing paper and is published in the 13th volume of the University of Calgary's Policy Paper Series.



The briefing paper serves as an extension of the current work that the three authors do as policy experts on the provincial committee to determine the feasibility of a basic income program in British Columbia. Since the Government of Canada launched the Canada Emergency Response Benefit (CERB), discussion surrounding basic income has resurfaced. The effects of the COVID-19 pandemic have been felt within the economy, which in turn, have impacted the everyday lives and well-being of Canadians across the country. Although basic income is a solution that needs to be considered, there are a number of questions and concerns that need to be answered and assessed. In order to determine if basic income could be a potential response to COVID-19, policy-makers, politicians, and other stakeholders need to examine numerous considerations such as the principles, objectives, and details that would contribute to a beneficial, well-designed, and successful program for all Canadians.

The effective implementation of CERB has catapulted the idea of a basic income to the forefront of conversation, suggesting it as a genuine response to the COVID-19 pandemic's impact on Canadians' financial well-being. However, in order to determine if this is the best response, government and stakeholders need to consider all aspects in building a basic income program to mitigate the negative effects of such a complex federal policy. Most interestingly, the authors note a number of unique considerations, such as eligibility, amount, disbursement, and taxation—all of which are quite tangible. They also include some more abstract considerations, including the role of basic income within the system of Canadian financial federalism, and behavioural changes that such a program would spark within Canadian society. In truth, the reality is that policies, especially ones as complex and multifaceted as basic income, have real-world, detrimental consequences if all the necessary aspects are not critically examined using evidence-based research. This is why asking questions and finding answers is so integral in the process of development and implementation. The authors highlight that they ask these difficult yet necessary questions not because they are against basic



income as a potential response, but because they want to provide insight into the realistic implications of a basic income in Canada.

A number of thought-provoking questions are provided within the article that I wholeheartedly agree with, and understand. Basic income as a public policy needs to be critically examined using evidence-based research in order to ensure effective design and implementation. Although I appreciated the myriad of considerations, I felt that the authors could have provided a more thorough examination of basic income in relation to seniors—a vulnerable population. My concern would be that seniors, some of whom rely heavily on forms of social assistance and who arguably are at greater risk of income insecurity, may be ineligible due to their age (a potential eligibility factor) or because of how much they receive in other forms of social assistance, including Old Age Security Pension (OAS) and provincial disability disbursements. Therefore, this could allow for seniors to more easily slip through the cracks.

#### **PUBLICATION SOURCE:**

Green, D., Kesselman, J.R., & Tedds, L. (2020). *Considerations for basic income as a COVID-19 response*. SPP Briefing Paper No. 13(11) May 2020. University of Calgary School of Public Policy.

<https://www.policyschool.ca/wp-content/uploads/2020/05/Basic-Income-Green-Kesselman-Tedds.pdf>

#### **ABOUT THE RESEARCH REVIEWER:**

*Elaine Tran (she/her) is an Honours Sociology student with a specialization in Family, Youth & Diversity at MacEwan University. Her honours thesis centres on anti-Asian racism, COVID-19, and media. Post-graduation, she intends to pursue a Master of Social Work degree to foster her interest in research and empower the well-being of others.*

## DECRIMINALIZING RACE

Reviewed by Aastha Tripathi

*Decriminalizing Race: The case for investing in community and social support for imprisoned and racialized women in Canada*, authored by Heather Lawson and published by the Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives, sheds light on the grim circumstances within the Canadian penal system. The report highlights factors contributing to the rise in numbers of racialized women in the federal penitentiary system, women's experience as offenders, and examines ways in which the prison system fails to rehabilitate and reintegrate offenders into society—despite high levels of funding. Furthermore, research suggests treating the root causes of incarceration to create stronger and safer communities. This could include reallocating funds to alleviate poverty, increasing the quality and quantity of services available for individuals coping with trauma, dismantling the effects of racism and colonization, and providing preventative support for families before criminalization.

According to the author, the rate of incarceration for women has increased 32.5% in the last 10 years (p. 8). A large majority of this incarcerated population are Indigenous and Black women. While Indigenous women only make up 4.3% of the adult female population in Canada, 40% of federally sentenced women are Indigenous—making them the fastest growing prison population (p. 10). Similarly, Black women make up 3% of the adult female population, however, they represent 9.12% of federal inmates in women's institutions (p.10). Considering that the rate of women accused of a Criminal Code offense decreased by 15% between 2000 and 2017, the statistics demonstrate that Indigenous and Black women are disproportionately represented in Canadian prisons (p. 4). Moreover, women have a reconviction rate of 38% in Canada. [1] This suggests that the marginalized population repeatedly enters the prison system due to reasons such as trauma, over-policing, sex work, or poverty.



Research suggests that the majority of incarcerated women are criminalized for behaviours used to cope with trauma, poverty, and mental health issues. [2] While the criminal offences that most women are sentenced for in federal prison include homicide, attempted murder, robbery, major assault, and drug trafficking/importation [3], it is important to note that these violent offences often occur as an act of self-defence against abusive partners or due to family and sexual violence, which are prevalent among racialized incarcerated women. Once incarcerated, women are routinely subjected to strip searches (p. 12). For inmates with histories of sexual assault, this practice can trigger past trauma. Correctional Services Canada (CSC) aims to provide opportunities to empower women to live with dignity and respect [4] by addressing traumatic circumstances to reintegrate the offender, but life in prison is a traumatic experience itself.

The feminization and criminalization of poverty are two processes impacting racialized women. [5] There is a heightened level of surveillance in low-income neighbourhoods, and those living there face an increased likelihood of being stopped by the police (p. 13). Furthermore, 53% of federally incarcerated Black women are currently serving time for a Schedule II drug offence. [6] A Schedule II substance is “defined as having high potential for abuse” (p. 13). Black women are often incarcerated for drug trafficking; their reason for carrying

can be due to poverty, or because they were being forced into the act by violent partners or family members (p. 13). This combination of poverty and criminalization has created an inescapable cycle.

The environment of sex work remains heavily criminalized. While sex work is illegal in Canada, supplying services is not. This model poses as protection for sex workers, however, it endangers them. Criminalizing the purchase of sex work pushes the industry further underground (p. 14). It allows clients to insist on exchanging services in less safe locations, and hinders workers from negotiating their terms of service. Indigenous and racialized women are overrepresented in the street worker population. They are not only marginalized by the attitudes and laws surrounding their work and racism, but are also repeatedly targeted by police and treated more harshly in the justice system (p. 14).

Already, there is a dearth of social supports for street-based sex workers. These women rely on sex work in order to fulfill basic needs like housing and transportation (p. 14). The current laws not only unfairly endanger and penalize them, but the current pandemic has left sex workers additionally vulnerable. In current circumstances, clients can take advantage of stressful situations, request riskier services, and pay lower rates. Due to its criminalization, workers are not eligible for benefits like the Canada Emergency Response Benefit (CERB) or Canada Emergency Student Benefit (CESB) (p. 15).

The COVID-19 pandemic has been influential in uncovering the dire need for decarceration in Canada. Currently, the rate of infection is nine times higher for inmates in the prison system. This is a direct result of the institution's inability to manage a pandemic due to overcrowding, poor sanitary practices, and a lack of oversight (p. 6). Already, prisons are operating at 102.2% capacity. [7] Considering that inmates live in close quarters and interact with multiple staff members without adequate protection, the prison system is jeopardizing the health and safety of inmates, their families, and staff at penitentiaries.

Examining these trends strongly indicates that although a decarceration strategy is crucial, the need to invest in social support is even more so. This would not only be fiscally responsible [8], but investing in focused programs that address the root causes of incarceration—such as racism, colonialism, poverty, trauma, and mental illness—would improve community, health, and encourage culturally appropriate social supports.

#### **PUBLICATION SOURCE:**

Lawson, H. (2020). *Decriminalizing race: The case for investing in community and social support for imprisoned and racialized women in Canada*. The Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives.

<https://www.policyalternatives.ca/sites/default/files/uploads/publications/National%20Office/2020/09/Decriminalizing%20Race.pdf>

#### **ADDITIONAL SOURCES:**

[1] Gobeil, R., Barrett, M. H. (2007). *Rates of recidivism for women offenders*. Correctional Service Canada.

<https://www.csc-scc.gc.ca/research/r192-eng.shtml>

[2] Pate, K. (2018). *Solitary by another name is just as cruel*. The Globe and Mail.

<https://www.theglobeandmail.com/opinion/article-solitary-by-another-name-is-just-as-cruel/>

- [3] Department of Justice (2015). *Six degrees from liberation: Legal needs of women in criminal and other matters*. Government of Canada. [https://www.justice.gc.ca/eng/rp-pr/csj-sjc/jsp-sjp/rr03\\_la20-rr03\\_aj20/index.html](https://www.justice.gc.ca/eng/rp-pr/csj-sjc/jsp-sjp/rr03_la20-rr03_aj20/index.html)
- [4] Correctional Service Canada. (2019). *Women's corrections*. Government of Canada. <https://www.csc-scc.gc.ca/women/002002-index-en.shtml>
- [5] Townson, M. (2000). *A report card on women and poverty*. The Canadian centre for Policy Alternatives.
- [6] Sapers, H. (2013). *Office of the correctional investigator annual report 2012-2013*. Government of Canada
- [7] Institute for Crime & Justice Policy Research (2017). *Canada Overview, World Prison Brief*. <https://www.prisonstudies.org/country/canada>
- [8] Public Works and Government Services Canada. (2018). *2018 Corrections and Conditional Release Statistical Overview*. Public Safety Canada. <https://www.publicsafety.gc.ca/cnt/rsrscs/pblctns/ccrso-2018/index-en.aspx#sectionb3>

#### **ABOUT THE RESEARCH REVIEWER:**

*Aastha Tripathi is a Bachelor of Arts student at Concordia University of Edmonton and is currently working with ESPC as a practicum student. She is expected to graduate in May 2021 and hopes to pursue a Masters in Psychology in the following academic year.*

## COLOURING OUTSIDE THE LINES

Reviewed by Jayme Wong

Colour of Poverty – Colour of Change (COP–COC) is an Ontario-based network of groups that collaborate to create community-based resources and tools that address and combat ethno-racial inequality and oppression. In January 2019, COP–COC submitted *Proposed Framework for a New Anti-Racism Strategy for Canada* during a national consultation on a new Canadian Anti-Racism Strategy, informed by a community consultation that same month.

The proposal provides a framework for a new Anti-Racism Strategy through manageable and attainable calls to action. Among the key principles and themes that highlight the need for an intersectional approach to policy-making, the proposal also includes 12 calls to action urging the federal government to make timely and specific changes to the New Anti-Racism Strategy. These actions address (p. 3):

- (1) racial inequalities in the labour market
- (2) the racialization of poverty
- (3) systemic racism in the criminal justice system and access to justice
- (4) racial discrimination in violence against women
- (5) racial discrimination in national security
- (6) systemic racism in child welfare
- (7) health inequities
- (8) inequities in accessing to basic necessities
- (9) inequities in access to education
- (10) systemic racism in immigration legislation and policy
- (11) systemic racism in citizenship legislation and policy
- (12) combating hate crimes

---

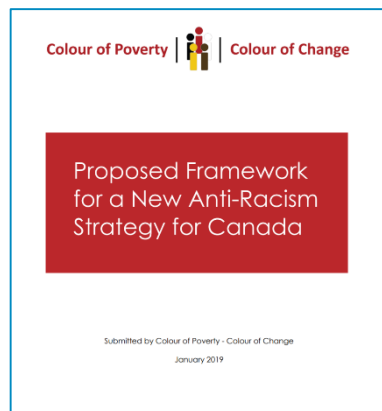
*Indigenous communities and communities of colour can and should be able to choose their own approaches to the Anti-Racism Strategy*

---

The strategy takes an intersectional approach to anti-racism advocacy, suggesting that women, LGBTQ+ and two-spirited peoples, and people with disabilities face disproportionate institutional discrimination and oppression. The proposal acknowledges the historical and ongoing racism that affects Indigenous communities and communities of colour, prompting the need for a new Anti-Racism Strategy. Although many of the calls to action are directed towards the federal government, the proposal notes that “systemic racism and racial discrimination know no jurisdictional bounds” (p. 3). COP–COC highlights the importance for all levels of government—from federal to municipal—to work together to enforce and enact the new Anti-Racism Strategy.

One recurring ask within the proposal urges the federal government to “require all Departments, Ministries, Divisions and other relevant institutions to collect and track disaggregated data with respect to ethno-racial background, and use this data to develop strategies for addressing systemic racism” (p. 4). Disaggregated data would show a trend in who is more likely to rely on government social services due to disproportionate rates of impoverishment and food insecurity, and who is also more likely to be discriminated against by pre-existing

legal practices and their often biased practitioners. The publication of the collected data would act as an accountability and transparency measure by the institutions that had previously been gate-keepers to such information and excluded people of colour from the process.



An important factor mentioned at the beginning of the proposal is that Indigenous communities and communities of colour can and should be able to choose their own approaches to the Anti-Racism Strategy. While this acknowledgement is only mentioned very briefly, it is important that the group has taken the time to acknowledge sovereignty and autonomy within communities of colour, and especially for Indigenous communities who have not had their rights respected by colonial institutions. The acknowledgement allows opportunities for negotiation and additions from Indigenous communities and communities of colour who wish to join in the process.

There are a few calls to action which seem rather brief—one of which is the call to address inequities in access to education. The proposal only mentions funding more post-secondary scholarship programs for racialized and marginalized communities, and allowing Indigenous communities to regain control over their educational practices. There is no mention that people of colour face multiple barriers—not simply financial—when accessing education. Just a few of the unmentioned barriers may include language, gender, or culture. Furthermore, “[transferring] educational matters from pre-school to post-secondary education to local Indigenous authorities” (p. 11) does not fully address the traumatic experiences that Indigenous students have faced and continue to face in the colonial education system.

Overall, the proposal is quite effective in painting a picture of what the future *could* be if an intersectional lens was used in all policy-making. The two most convincing tenets of this proposal are (1) the involvement of all racialized and marginalized in policy-making decisions, and (2) urging public institutions to be more transparent about their practices. Canada still has a long way to go with its Anti-Racism Strategy, but if even one call to action within COP–COC’s proposed framework is achieved, the country would be that much closer to eradicating racism.

#### **PUBLICATION SOURCE:**

Colour of Poverty – Colour of Change. (2019). *Proposed framework for a new anti-racism strategy for Canada*.

[https://ocasi.org/sites/default/files/PROPOSED COP-COC FRAMEWORK for Anti-Racism Strategy Jan 2019 0.pdf](https://ocasi.org/sites/default/files/PROPOSED_COP-COC_FRAMEWORK_for_Anti-Racism_Strategy_Jan_2019_0.pdf)

#### **ABOUT THE RESEARCH REVIEWER:**

*Jayne Wong graduated from the University of Lethbridge in 2014 with a BA in English and Philosophy, and more recently graduated from the University of Alberta in 2020 with an MA in English and Film Studies. She currently works at a local non-profit, The Learning Centre Literacy Association.*

---

Through our research, analysis, and engagement, we hope to create a community in which all people are full and valued participants.

---

## ABOUT

ESPC is an independent, non-profit, charitable organization. Our focus is social research, particularly in the areas of low-income and poverty.

We are dedicated to encouraging the adoption of equitable social policy, supporting the work of other organizations who are striving to improve the lives of Edmontonians, and educating the public regarding the social issues that impact them on a daily basis.

## OUR STAFF

**Susan Morrissey**, Executive Director

**Sandra Ngo**, Research Coordinator

**Jenn Rossiter**, Research Services & Capacity Building Coordinator

**Sydney Sheloff**, Research Officer

**Brett Lambert**, Community Engagement Coordinator

**Justine Basilan**, Executive Assistant

## RESEARCH UPDATE

The Edmonton Social Planning Council, in collaboration with our volunteers, strives to provide stakeholders and community members with up-to-date reviews on recently published social research reports and publications.

Interested in volunteering? Email [jennr@edmontonsocialplanning.ca](mailto:jennr@edmontonsocialplanning.ca)